
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest



Master Plan Progress Report



Report Number 13

October 2003

From the Desk of the NHAL State Forest Superintendent

Dear forest enthusiast,

In our trek through the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest master plan we're beginning to see the light in the forest. Department staff and members of the public dedicated many hours and worked together through several phases of the master plan process. The trail has been long, but, given the size and complexity of the NHAL state forest, we believe our combined efforts are necessary.

Gathering baseline data alone required hours of work in the field and at the desks of scientists and resource managers. Updated documentation was needed to make informed proposals about future management of forest resources. To collect your ideas and input, public involvement sessions were scheduled at each step of the way.

Like the waves on the shore of Trout Lake, issues tended to ebb and flow throughout our Master Planning Process. It's impossible for a forest to be everything to everyone. We

continue to strive for a balanced management approach to sustain the forest resource and satisfy growing demands for its use.

It's autumn here in the forest and in our master planning process, a time to gather the fruits of our labor and prepare for the coming year. It is our sincere hope that we arrive at the best possible place in the forest... a management scenario that protects and enhances natural resources while providing for those of you who use and enjoy the "Highlands".

At the present time we are writing and editing the draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We look forward to presenting this to you for review and input in early 2004.

Sincerely,

Dennis Leith



NORTHERN HIGHLAND AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST MASTER PLAN “PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE”

Summary of Public Involvement and Comments

Public involvement in the Preferred Alternative phase of the Northern Highland American Legion (NHAL) State Forest master plan was excellent. A public meeting held in Boulder Junction, WI, April 29, 2003, saw good participation with 117 people attending. More than a dozen Department of Natural Resources personnel were available to answer questions and provide information at the open house event. Media coverage included local television, two newspapers, and a radio station.

Public comments were received from previous participants and many new faces, local residents, and visitors from other parts of the state. These comments represent a diversity of people and user groups. Whatever their interest, many who responded to the Preferred Alternative expressed a genuine sense of ownership and responsibility for the abundant resources contained in Wisconsin's largest state forest.

A number of individuals support the idea of keeping some or all management activity and forest use at status quo. Others suggest opportunity exists to set new goals for the forest's future, to meet changing demands for resources, and to diversify recreational opportunities.

People said that the NHAL deserves special attention, due to its abundant lakes and forest resources, to set a precedent for quality management. Given its history and size, some suggest that the NHAL set an

example for management of other state forests. They said it should be a demonstration site for modern forestry.

In their comments some people asked that the state forest maintain a commitment to the public to provide opportunities for nature-oriented recreation and to maintain the character of the Northwoods to “keep the North the North.” They prefer that the Department remain true to traditions of use on the NHAL. Others desire more recreational diversity and ask that new user groups be given equal consideration.

Key Issues

Among the many comments received during the public comment period, some topics received more attention than others. While the volume of input received on a particular topic is important, planners and managers are particularly interested in “what” folks have to say. Public comments are reviewed for compelling arguments or concerns both for and against various proposals. Among the public comments submitted, the following key issues emerged during the Master Plan Preferred Alternatives phase:

The Most Supported Issues

- Silent sport opportunities on the forest (Hike, Bike, Hunt/Fish, Ski and Canoe)
- Boundary expansion of the forest
- Management for old growth forest

The Most Opposed Issues

- Boulder Junction golf course proposal
- Razorback Lake campsite additions
- Changing designations for wild and wilderness lakes

The Most Divided Issues

- ATV trails and use on the State Forest
- Bittersweet-Prong Lakes recreation area

Additional Topics & Issues Addressed by the Public

MODERATELY SUPPORTED

- Aesthetic qualities
- Education programs
- Forestry Education Center
- Aspen mgt.
- Biodiversity
- Sustainable forestry
- Old growth forest
- Fire as a management tool
- Non-motor lakes
- Carry-in remote lakes
- Wild and wilderness lakes
- Wild and wilderness areas
- Shoreline protection
- Remote camping
- Habitat management
- Non-game species
- Endangered resources
- Pine /Conifer management

SOME SUPPORT

- Education and interpretation
- Invasive species management
- Active forest management
- Early successional forest
- Forest production
- Ecosystem management
- Forest wetlands harvest
- Monitoring of mgt. & recreation activity
- Lake buffer zones
- Pine barrens mgt.
- Increased camping
- Rustic camping
- Wilderness camping
- Game species management
- BMPs
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SOME OPPOSITION

- Increased camping
- Clear cutting
- Active forest management
- High deer population
- Forest production
- Firefly Lake increased campsites
- Forest wetlands harvest
- Wild and wilderness areas
- Personal watercraft (PWC)
- Boundary expansion
- Snowmobiles
- Old growth mgt.
- Aspen

MODERATE OPPOSITION

- Forest fragmentation



Public Involvement History

- A total of 388 individual comments were received on the Preferred Alternative.
- More than 230 mailing contacts were updated or added to the database since April 14, 2003 when we received the first Preferred Alternative comment letter.
- More than 1500 names /addresses are on our active mailing list.
- More than 2,700 individual public comments have been recorded for the entire duration of the NHAL master planning process as of Oct. 1, 2003.

Groups /Organizations that Provided “Preferred Alternative” Comments

- Camp Manito-wish, YMCA
- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, UW-Madison
- The Nature Conservancy, Northern WI office
- The Sierra Club, John Muir Chapter
- WATVA – Wis. All Terrain Vehicle Assoc.
- Wis. Audubon Council
- Friends of the Brule River and Forest
- Big Lake Property Owners Assoc.
- Dept. of Forest Ecology and Management, UW-Madison
- ECCOLA – Environmentally Concerned Citizens of the Lakeland Area
- PCA – Packaging Corp. of America
- Wis. Paper Council
- Wis. Sharp-Tailed Grouse Society
- Center for Limnology, Trout Lake Station, UW-Madison
- Fort Atkinson High School, environmental science students and teacher
- Partners in Forestry, landowner cooperative
- PAX Christi Northwoods, local chapter of Catholic peace and justice movement
- Lake States Lumber Inc.
- The Ruffed Grouse Society
- Residents and property owners
- Waterfront property owners
- Recreation users of the forest
- A local wood products company
- Varied local business interests
- An outdoor adventure guide
- A licensed fishing guide
- Several resort owners
- A recreational equipment retailer
- Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
- Area naturalists /environmental educators
- Recreation clubs and sportsman’s organizations
- Local Government, Tribal and Agency representatives
- ...and many other individuals and affiliations.

What do we do with all the public comments?

Thousands of comments are heard throughout the master plan process. These are received in many different formats. The various means that folks use to tell their story range from greeting cards and memos to news clippings, photos and nearly every form of communication available. What do we do with this correspondence?

State Forest Superintendent Dennis Leith, the primary recipient of public comments, first reads each card, letter and email. Comments containing outstanding questions or demanding an immediate reply are given a response or forwarded to the proper contact. All comments are then processed for recording and analysis.

Each public comment is read and reviewed a second time, summarized, and filed. Copies and summaries of correspondences are shared with master planning team members. These are reviewed during the process of developing the evolving master plan.

Public comments are important to the Department’s decision-making process, however, they are only one part of the equation. Decision-makers consider a variety of elements including: state statutes and Department responsibilities, scientific findings, ecological capabilities of the resource, in addition to financial and other constraints.



Distribution of Comment Providers

Of the comments received, nearly 1/2 came from 14 cities/towns nearest the forest including:

Eagle River
Arbor Vitae
St. Germain
Sayner
Presque Isle

Rhineland
Woodruff
Minocqua
Mercer
Winchester

Boulder Junction
Lac du Flambeau
Lake Tomahawk
Manitowish Waters

At least one comment was received from a visitor, former or seasonal resident, or non-resident landowner in each of ten other states. Contacts from more than 270 zip code locations in 65 Wisconsin counties are represented on our participant's list.

We wish to thank the many individuals who participated in the Preferred Alternative phase of our public involvement process. Your thoughtful comments and continued participation is greatly appreciated.

Information and literature contact:

www.dnr.state.wi.us/master_planning/nhal/
Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources
107 Sutliff Ave.
Rhineland, WI 54501
715-365-8993
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Comments and questions contact:

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Thank You !

